

# MIDWEST CENTER FOR HEALTH SERVICES & POLICY RESEARCH

## NATIONAL NEWS

### *Health Services Research at the Interface*

The 17<sup>th</sup> Annual VA HSR&D Service Meeting was held February 24-26 at the Washington DC Renaissance Hotel. This year's theme centered on the critical roles VA HSR&D plays in the development and evaluation of new methods for improving health care to veterans and in the dissemination of research findings to managers and policymakers.

The meeting kicked off on the evening of the 24<sup>th</sup> with an outstanding keynote address by Dr. Barbara K. Rimer, Director, Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences at the National Cancer Institute. Her talk, "Cancer Related Health Services Research: Many Questions, Too Little Research," was the topic of many side bar conversations throughout the two day conference. As one researcher noted, "I think she talked about every health services research project on Cancer ever done in the VA."

#### *In this issue:*

- ✓ *17th Annual HSR&D Meeting*
- ✓ *Research at Lakeside*
- ✓ *Hines/Loyola Poster Day*

Welcoming remarks and conference highlights were presented by Dr. Eugene Oddone on the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Oddone is the Director, Center for Health Services Research in Primary Care at the Durham VA Medical Center and host for this year's conference. Dr. John Demakis, Director, Health Services Research and Development Service, provided an overview of HSR&D accomplishments over the past year to the more than 500 participants in the audience. Dr. Thomas Garthwaite, Deputy Under Secretary for Health, and the Honorable David E. Price, Ph.D., Democratic Representative North Carolina District 4 also

spoke to the assembled group. A Plenary paper section followed the opening remarks.

The remainder of the morning was devoted to concurrent paper sessions and workshops. At noon, the groups broke into special interest roundtables to discuss topical areas of interest over lunch. This year, each of the 10 QUERIs, the ERICs and the VIREC were all present to discuss current activities and future plans with the conference attendees.

The invited keynote speakers gave their perspectives of "Health Service Research at the Interface." Dr. Robert Petzel, Network Director for VISN 13 discussed the interface between health services research and policy, Dr. Earl Steinberg, Vice President of Covance Health Economic Improvement Systems discussed the interface between health services research and the private sector, and Dr. Jack Feussner, Chief Research and Development Officer, spoke on translating results into improved patient care. After the panel discussion, concurrent paper sessions and workshops filled the rest of the afternoon. From 5:30 to 8:00 P.M., selected posters from investigators throughout the HSR&D community were displayed.

Paper sessions and workshops began early on the 26<sup>th</sup>. After the recognition of the pre- and post-doctoral poster awards, the Directors of the Epidemiologic Research Information Centers (ERICs) spoke on the activities of their Centers. Closing remarks were given by Drs. Demakis and Oddone and the conference was adjourned at noon.

The staff at MCHSPR would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Rudolf H. Moos, Director of the HSR&D Center of Excellence in Palo Alto on receiving the 1998 Under Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Services Research. We would also like to thank the Durham Field Program for organizing and hosting an excellent meeting.

May  
1999  
Volume V  
Number 1

Page 1

---

---

## ***QUERI Modules to Meet***

May 20-21, 1999 is the scheduled date for the Second Annual QUERI meeting. Dr. Kenneth Kizer will open the meeting with welcoming remarks. Dr. Demakis will provide a brief update on QUERI activities of the past year. Later in the morning, groups will meet to discuss crosscutting issues relevant to all QUERI groups, followed by a discussion focusing on organizational change and guideline implementation. The first afternoon and into the following day, each QUERI group will meet to update/revise their strategic plan. The meeting will be held in Reston, Virginia.

## ***Promotions Considered***

VHA Notice 98-04 released November 5, 1998 announced the consideration of promoting Health Research Scientists to the GS-14 and above grade level for Medical Research, Health Services R&D, Rehabilitation R&D and Cooperative Studies. Some of the criteria to be used in evaluating the nominations include: successful past and current research support, publications, membership on national scientific advisory or peer review com-

mittees, invitations to speak or chair sessions at national meetings, recognition by peers as leaders in a research field, and an active role in the training of young scientists and in formal teaching. Each nomination for position classification will initially be evaluated and rated by the nominating medical facility, submitted to the appropriate VHA R&D Service, and forwarded to the Chief R&D Officer for concurrence. The deadlines for submission of nomination for all R&D services will be March 1 and September 1.

## ***HQ Announces Associate Investigator Program***

In a March 17, 1999 letter, HQ announced the opportunity for VA medical facilities to request support for Associate Investigators. The intent of the Associate Investigator Program is to provide research training for clinicians and non-clinician scientists with little or no research experience. The training will be provided by mentored, senior investigators who are part of Centers of Excellence or REAPs. Participants may be approved for an appointment of up to 2 years, with a possible 1 or 2 year extension. For more information, contact Robert Small, Health Services Research and Development Service at (202) 273-8256.

## ***Weaver Revives LIP Program***

Dr. Fran Weaver, Acting Director at MCH-SPR announced the availability of small grants to support locally-initiated research projects in health services. These grants are designed to support local short-term projects to be conducted during the summer of 1999.

The intent of these small grants is to support the development of full research proposals through providing funds for developmental work. Applications for the grants were due

on April 10<sup>th</sup> and funding decisions were announced on May 4<sup>th</sup>. The following applications were approved; Altered Consciousness and Outcome Following Brain Injury (Pape); Development of a Measure to Assess Dementia-Specific Assisted Living in Illinois (Guihan, Edelman); Reliability and Validity of Select Data in the National Patient Care Database (NCPD): A Pilot Study (Kerr, Cowper); Estimating Mastectomy Costs: A New Method for Cost Analysis (Murphy, Hynes).

## ***MCHSPR Activities At Annual Meeting***

The HSR&D Annual Meeting provides an opportunity to showcase the work investigators are engaged in to their counterparts across the country. At this year's meeting, a number of MCHSPR staff presented their studies. The presentations this year included:

### **Oral Presentations:**

*Corticosteroid Utilization and Outcomes in HIV Associated Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia: Threefold Higher Mortality Among Severely Ill Patients when Corticosteroid given by CEC Guidelines*, presented by: **C Bennett**

*Cost Effectiveness of Team Managed Home Based Primary Care*, presented by: **S Hughes**

*Cost Effectiveness of a Primary Care Intervention: Results from a VA Cooperative Study*, presented by: **D Hynes**

### **Poster Presentations:**

*Characteristics and Outcomes of Women Undergoing Hysterectomies in VA Facilities*, by **FM Weaver, DM Hynes, D Ippolito, W Cull, B Thakkar, J Gibbs**

*An Overview of the Decision Support System (dSs)*, by **PA Murphy, DM Hynes, DC Cowper, JD Kubal, M Kerr**.

### **Roundtable Presentations:**

*QUERI, Spinal Cord Injury Project*, facilitated by **FM Weaver**

*VA Information Resource Center (VIREC)*, facilitated by **DC Cowper**

### **Workshops**

*Using National VA Data in Health Services and Epidemiologic Research*, panelists: **J Mayfield, M Kerr, JD Kubal**

### **Hands-on, Real-time Demonstration**

*The VA Information Resource Center Website*, demonstrated by **M Kerr**

Following the Annual Meeting, two presentations by MCHSPR investigators were delivered at the MDRC Continuing Dialogue on Costs:

*VIREC Overview*, presented by **DM Hynes**, Co-Director VIREC

*Data Initiatives: VHA Data Quality Summit, National Patient Care Database, and Enrollment Database*, presented by **DC Cowper**, Co-Director VIREC

### ***Hines Hospital Phone Numbers have changed!***

**(708)202-VETS-** Hines VA Hospital Main Line

**(708)202-2414-** MCHSPR Direct Line

**(708)202-2316-** MCHSPR FAX Line

**(708)202-2413-** VIREC Direct Line

**(708)202-2415-** VIREC FAX Line

**Cut this out for a quick reference!**

Cut along this line

## ***Hines-Loyola Poster Day a Success***

MCHSPR  
NEWS

On March 30, 1999, the annual Hines VA Hospital – Loyola University – North Chicago Medical Center – Chicago Medical School Research Day was held at Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital. The event was well attended by the Chicago research community. Over 150 scientific research posters were displayed. Dr. Rita Young, ACOS for Research and Development at Hines and Dr. John Robinson, Professor of Medicine and Associate Dean of Research at Loyola University Chicago Stritch

School of Medicine were the hosts for the event. MCHSPR investigators *Denise Hynes, Fran Weaver, Dolores Ippolito, Bharat Thakkar, Bill Cull and Jim Gibbs* received a first place ribbon for their poster, "Quality of Care for Mastectomy Patients Treated at VA Hospitals: Results from a National Study." The poster was prepared by *Madeline Thornton*, MCHSPR Forms Designer. The annual event provides an opportunity for researchers to share their preliminary findings and to discover the myriad research projects their colleagues are conducting.

### ***Staff Accomplishments***

Dr. ***Fran Weaver*** has been selected to serve as the Point of Contact in VISN 12 for Research .

Dr. ***Denise Hynes*** was appointed to serve on the National dSs Steering Committee.

***Diane Cowper*** was invited to join two work groups resulting from the VHA Data Summit: the Data Quality Council Workgroup and the Data Standards Workgroup.

*Dr. William G. Henderson, Director, CSPCC*, has been elected to the Board of Directors for the Society for Clinical Trials. Congratulations, Dr. Henderson on a well-deserved honor.

A radio interview with Dr. Frances Weaver discussing the importance and future of home health care will be aired on Monday, May 24, 1999 on WBEZ-Chicago.

ON A MORE  
PERSONAL

MCHSPR bids a fond farewell to two staff members, ***Kevin Clark*** and ***Alec Ulasevich***. Good luck to both in the future.

Congratulations are extended to ***Jill Palmer*** and Mike Driver on the birth of their daughter Jolene Michelle.

NOTE

DEADLINES

Letters of Intent

**IIR Grants**

Appeals

Investigator Initiated for New Staff

Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholars

HSR&D Dissertation Fellowship

Anytime

May 1 and **November 1**

Within 6 weeks after notification of results

Anytime---within one year of appointment

Discuss with Field Program Director

April 1

EDITOR  
Diane C. Cowper, MA

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR  
Frances M. Weaver, Ph.D.

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT  
Carol Durczak

DESIGN/LAYOUT  
Madeline Thornton

Contributions or  
Suggestions should be addressed to:  
Diane Cowper, M.A.  
c/o HSR&D (151H)  
P.O. Box 5000  
Hines VA Hospital  
Hines, IL 60141-5151

EDITORIAL  
CREDITS

## Meet a member of our Affiliated Senior Staff

*Dr. Bennett's research interests are primarily in four areas: (1) cost-effectiveness and quality of care for AIDS-related PCP; (2) quality of life and utility assessments of prostate cancer patients; (3) costs and quality of care for bone marrow transplant and breast cancer patients; and (4) the impact of managed care on AIDS and cancer treatment.*

### **Charles Lee Bennett, M.D., Ph.D.**

Dr. Charles Bennett received his M.D. in 1981 from the University of Pennsylvania and his Ph.D. in Public Policy at the RAND Graduate School in Santa Monica, California in 1989. Dr. Bennett is Board Certified in Internal Medicine with a subspecialty in Medical Oncology. His postdoctoral training was done as a Fellow in Hematology/ Oncology at the University of Chicago (1984-87). Prior to that time, he was an Intern and Resident in Medicine at Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago, IL.

Since 1994, Dr. Bennett has been a Senior Research Associate at the VA Lakeside Medical Center, as well as an Associate Professor of Medicine at Northwest-

ern University Medical School in Chicago. Dr. Bennett is currently Director, HSR&D VA Chicago Healthcare System-Lakeside Division. He held prior research appointments at the Durham VA Medical Center, where he was an Assistant Professor at Duke University School of Medicine (1991-94) and at the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center, where he was an Assistant Professor of Medicine at UCLA School of Medicine (1989-91).

Dr. Bennett's research interests are primarily in four areas: (1) cost-effectiveness and quality of care for AIDS-related PCP; (2) quality of life and utility assessments of prostate cancer patients; (3) costs and quality of care for bone marrow transplant and breast cancer patients; and (4) the impact of managed care on AIDS and cancer treatment.

Dr. Bennett sits on the editorial/advisory boards of three journals: Journal of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, The Prostate Journal, and the Journal of Clinical Oncology. He is currently the Principal Investigator on four VA research grants and is the Principal Investigator on an ongoing NIH study, as well as two American Cancer studies. Dr. Bennett has published over 100 articles. His most recent publications include:

1. Bennett, C.L., Pajean, T.J., Tallman, M.S., Stadtmauer, E.A., Marsh, R.W., Friedenber, W., Lazarus, H.M., Kaminer, L., Golub, R.M., Rowe, J.M. Economic Analysis of a Randomized Placebo-Controlled Phase III Study of Granulocyte Macrophage Colony Stimulating Factor in Adult Patients (>55 to 70 Years of Age) with Acute Myelogenous Leukemia: An Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (E1490) Trial. Annals of Oncology, 10:1-6; 1999.
2. Bennett, C.L., Tosteson, T.D., Schmitt, B., Weinberg, P.D., Ernsto, M.S., Ross, S.D. Maximum Androgen-Blockade with Medical or Surgical Castration in Advanced Prostate Cancer: A Meta-Analysis of Nine Published Randomized Controlled Trials and 4128 Patients Using Flutamide. Prostate Cancer and Prostatic Diseases, 1999, in press.
3. Bennett, C.L., Stinson, T.J. Comparing Cost-Effectiveness Analyses for the Clinical Oncology Setting: The Example of the GOG 111 Trial. Cancer Investigation, 1999, in press.

Special Insert



## *Prostate Disease Research at Lakeside*

The Chicago VA Healthcare System/ Lakeside Division Health Services Research Program, under the direction of Charles Bennett MD, PhD, has developed a nationally recognized program in prostate cancer. The program focuses on clinical, health services, and epidemiologic assessments and collaborative projects with VA Career Development Awardees and other researchers from the three Chicago VA medical centers, as well as the Durham VA ERIC and the Minneapolis VA Prostate Cancer Cochrane Center. The health services studies address shared decision making, quality of life and utility assessments among Veterans with prostate cancer.

Under the joint direction of Dr. Bennett and Sara Knight PhD (1999 recipient of a VA HSR&D Career Development Award from the Chicago VA/ Lakeside Division), longitudinal studies focus on low literacy among the veteran population. One study, published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* in 1998, found that low literacy, rather than race, appeared to be the more important determinant of advanced stage prostate cancer at the time of diagnosis. A second study found that quality of life instruments that have been validated in the non-VA setting were also useful among veterans, provided that interviewer assistance is available [Knight S, J Urol 1998].

In collaboration with Arthur Elstein, PhD, (Chicago VAMC/ Westside Division and University of Illinois at Chicago), interviewers prospectively assess quality of life and utilities of newly diagnosed prostate cancer at six VA sites [Kim S, Oncology 1999]. In collaboration with the Durham ERIC, Dr. Bennett and Vince Freeman MD, MPH at Hines VAH (VA HSR&D Career Development Awardee) are evaluating whether African American and white prostate cancer patients differ with respect to CAG repeat

length on the androgen receptor gene and, if so, do these differences account for advanced stage of cancer at diagnosis among African Americans with prostate cancer? Clinical studies from the group include participation in a national study of combined androgen blockade for metastatic or locally advanced prostate cancer, in which the Lakeside program has the second largest accrual in the country.

Drs. Charles Bennett and Brian Schmitt of the Lakeside Division recently published a meta-analysis of flutamide as part of a combined androgen blockade approach to metastatic prostate cancer and are collaborating with Timothy Wilt MD, MPH in an American Cancer Society funded effort to develop a Cochrane Review on this subject [Bennett CL, The Prostate 1999]. In a project that has been approved as part of the 1999 VA QUERI initiative (PIs: C Bennett MD PhD and S Knight, PhD), relevant clinical information, as well as prospectively obtained utility assessments, will be incorporated into a novel decision making program that provides this information to clinicians prior to the initial discussion with prostate cancer patients about their therapeutic options.

The clinical and health services expertise of the prostate cancer program at the Chicago VA/ Lakeside Division will be helpful as Dr. Knight and Dr. Bennett, in collaboration with Mike Gaziano MD MPH of the Boston MAVERIC program, lead an effort to assess quality of life among veterans who participate in the recently proposed VA/Southwest Oncology Group sponsored study for prostate cancer prevention (the SELECT trial).

In summary, the Chicago VA Healthcare System/ Lakeside Division prostate cancer program is supported by \$3 million in peer reviewed funds from the VA and the American Cancer Society and is responsible for